

Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal
Curriculum Development for 1-Unit Career Exploration Counseling Course
Submitted by Erica Rebeca Ruiz
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Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status

Full-time hire date: January 2015

Previous Sabbaticals: 0

Background of Sabbatical Project

One of the core elements of Guided Pathways is to help clarify an academic path for students. Different avenues of support that help meet this goal include:

- K-12 partnerships focused on career/college program exploration
- Use of multiple measures to assess student needs
- First-year experience programs to help students explore their field of interest and choose a major

In essence at the heart of this framework is career development theory. As an academic/career counselor, I am fortunate to be able to hold a space for students to research, explore, and develop career paths that align with their values, skills, and personality type. At Ventura College (VC) we currently offer a 3-unit Career and Life Planning course. The student learning outcomes of this course are to develop a comprehensive study of career development, academic goals, and life planning. It includes assessment tools for identifying personality type (MBTI), clarifying interests, skills, and values, and establishing college majors and careers. Additionally, it addresses psychological and social issues that impact career and life choices. As a culminating project students demonstrate capability in the decision-making process, labor market trends, career research, interviewing skills and resume writing. As it currently stands, students that participate in the First Year Experience Program (FYE) at Ventura College must have received college credit for a career and life planning course during high school or enroll in a counseling course during their first year at VC.

I have worked with the FYE program at Ventura College for the last 6 years. During this time FYE has undergone various changes. However, at its core we have always stressed the importance of career development and life planning. What I have witnessed as a counselor is that students who have received college credit for this course during high school typically need a re-introduction to career planning as they enter their academic journey at an institution of higher education. Students that take the course during high school complete it during 9th grade and once they enter college need to re-assess and evaluate their career goals and life expectations.

Purpose of Sabbatical Project

As a professor of Counseling V02: Career and Life Planning at Ventura College, I propose developing a 1-unit course on exploring careers and college majors. By having a 1-unit option, students will work with counselor at a critical time at the beginning of their academic journey. Students who received college credit during high school and now find themselves undecided about their educational or career goals will receive support in validating their decisions. Students will be guided through a process that focuses on their individual interests, skills, personality and values to aid in the selection of a major, determine a career direction and develop career goals. Students will be able to make the connection between different career assessments and identify information about possible college major and career choices. Decision-making models and goal-setting techniques will be used to develop short- and long-term education and career plans.

During my sabbatical I will:

- 1) Enroll as a student at Santa Monica College (SMC) and take their 1-unit Counseling and Testing 12: Exploring Career and College Majors course. SMC has one of the most innovative and comprehensive career counseling centers within the California community college system. As a student of the course, I will experience first-hand what students go through when taking the course, which will help me create the framework for what this course could look like at Ventura College.
- 2) Become Strong Interest Inventory certified. This certification will strengthen my counseling toolbox and enable me to provide students with dynamic career direction and insight to options that align with their interests and abilities.
- 3) Collaborate with the articulation officer to submit a course outline of record for a 1-unit career exploration course and receive approval through the appropriate channels, i.e., tech review, curriculum committee, and board of trustees.
- 4) Work with registrars and Banner experts to help mitigate repetition of the career counseling course for those students that completed it during high school. Oftentimes, in FYE we have students interested in the program that do not remember that they took the course in high school and got college credit for it. If the student took the course with one of our sister campuses, Banner does not block them from enrolling in the same course at another campus. This creates confusion for a lot of students and in FYE we typically screen and call students to inform them of such an error. Creating a block in Banner will mitigate this problem.
- 5) Build a connection and further understand which local county high schools are requiring the career course as a graduation requirement.

Value of Sabbatical Project to VCCCD and Ventura College

Building healthy relationships across our local county high schools can help foster a sense of trust and collaboration with high school partners. Presently, I am only aware of two school districts that are requiring the career counseling course as part of their graduation requirements: Ventura and Santa Paula. I would like to research and learn more about which high schools are requiring this course and how we can get more data on those who will be coming into our district and college with the course completed.

Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College Students

As an FYE counselor, I often find that most first-year students enter college with an exploratory mindset. When prompted with questions such as, “What is your academic goal?” or “What do you plan on studying while at VC?” I find that students need time to delve deeper into their values, skills and interests, in order to make the connection between these characteristics and their academic and career goals. In my counseling appointments and workshops, I try to demystify the idea that a major is equivalent to a career and take the time to model how to research and understand the versatility of majors. I also stress the importance of research and understanding how your major and career should align with your most natural abilities and personality type. A 45-minute appointment is often not enough time to truly deconstruct what this means. In any counselor/client relationship the ability to return on a weekly basis and revisit specific goals and ideas makes for a healing process. Offering students the option of taking a 1-unit course where they can dedicate the time, effort and commitment to this research would help clarify their academic path.

Values of Sabbatical Project to the Instructor

A sabbatical by definition is the concept of taking an intentional break from our professional routines and devote time to re-invigorate our careers and reframe our approach to the world of work. I strongly believe that this project will help enhance my dedication to helping students explore and understand their vocation and how it relates to being their most authentic selves. Per the AFT contract, the primary purpose of a sabbatical is to help maintain dynamic faculty and encourage professional growth. Through this opportunity I will be able to build a stronger foundation to my counseling skills and assist students as they navigate their academic and personal goals.

I thank the committee for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erica Ruiz, M.Ed.
Associate Professor of Counseling